If Anti-Zionism is Antisemitism, Then the Best Form of Government for Israel Would Be a Theocracy

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The assertion that “anti-Zionism is antisemitism” has gained significant traction in contemporary political discourse, particularly as it relates to critiques of Israel and its policies. This argument suggests that opposing Zionism— the political ideology supporting the establishment and continuation of a Jewish homeland in Israel— often veers into antisemitic territory. If this claim is accepted, a new question emerges: What is the most appropriate form of governance for a state facing such opposition? This paper argues that if anti-Zionism is indeed a manifestation of antisemitism, then a theocratic form of government may offer the best solution for Israel. A theocracy would ground Israel's legitimacy in divine law rather than secular nationalism, potentially unifying the state under religious authority and addressing both internal and external challenges. However, this proposal raises complex questions about democracy, civil liberties, and Israel's place in the global order, which will be explored in depth.

Keywords: anti-Zionism, antisemitism, Zionism, Israel, theocracy, Jewish law, secularism, democracy, human rights, religious governance, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jewish state, political discourse.

Note: Verbatim GPT-4o.

I. Introduction

A. Overview of the Claim "Anti-Zionism is Antisemitism"

1. **Definition and Historical Context of Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism**
   Anti-Zionism, in its simplest form, refers to opposition to the political movement of Zionism, which advocates for the establishment and continued existence of a Jewish homeland in Israel. Historically, anti-Zionism has emerged from various ideological and geopolitical perspectives, ranging from Arab and Palestinian opposition to the Israeli state's founding to leftist critiques of nationalism. Religious and political objections to Zionism have also been present among certain Jewish groups, including ultra-Orthodox sects that view the establishment of Israel as premature in religious terms.

Antisemitism, on the other hand, refers to prejudice, hostility, or discrimination against Jews based on their religious, ethnic, or cultural identity. Its historical roots run deep, spanning centuries of persecution in Europe, from religious scapegoating to racial antisemitism in the modern era, culminating in the horrors of the Holocaust. Post-World War II, antisemitism was universally condemned, though it remains a persistent form of hatred.

The conflation of anti-Zionism and antisemitism as a single concept emerged in the late 20th century, particularly following Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War. As criticism of Israel's policies and its occupation of Palestinian territories grew, accusations of antisemitism began to surface, with proponents arguing that opposition to the existence of a Jewish state—rather than just its policies—was a form of antisemitic discrimination. Over time, the claim that "anti-Zionism is antisemitism" became more prominent, gaining institutional backing from organizations such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which included certain forms of anti-Zionist rhetoric in its definition of antisemitism.

2. **How the Claim Evolved and Became Institutionalized in Modern Discourse**
   The claim that "anti-Zionism is antisemitism" evolved over several decades, as the global perception of Israel and Zionism shifted. Initially, anti-Zionism was primarily a political stance, grounded in opposition to the displacement of Palestinians or the nationalistic aspects of Zionism. However, as the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict intensified, particularly after the 1967 Six-Day War and Israel's expansion of its territories, some forms of anti-Zionist rhetoric adopted antisemitic undertones, using age-old stereotypes about Jewish control and power.

This shift was especially pronounced in international political forums, such as the United Nations, where debates about Zionism became increasingly polarized. The adoption of UN Resolution 3379 in 1975, which declared that "Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination," sparked controversy and was later repealed in 1991. However, the resolution highlighted the global divide over Zionism and how criticism of Israel could sometimes overlap with antisemitic narratives.

In the 21st century, the institutionalization of the idea that anti-Zionism is antisemitism became more formalized, particularly through the adoption of the IHRA's working definition of antisemitism, which includes examples of antisemitism related to criticism of Israel. This definition has been adopted by several Western governments and academic institutions, embedding the argument into legal and political frameworks. While proponents argue that this approach protects Jewish communities from discrimination, critics contend that it conflates legitimate political discourse with hate speech, stifling debate over Israel's policies.

B. The Theocratic Argument

1. **Introducing the Central Argument: If the Claim is True, the Ideal Government for Israel May Be a Theocracy**
   The central argument of this paper takes the claim that "anti-Zionism is antisemitism" to its logical conclusion by proposing that if anti-Zionism is indeed rooted in antisemitism, the best form of government for Israel would be a theocracy. The argument asserts that if the opposition to Zionism is not merely political but is instead a reflection of hostility toward Jewish identity and existence, then a secular or democratic model of governance may be inadequate for addressing the spiritual and existential challenges facing the Jewish state.

A theocratic government, based on Jewish religious law and principles, could serve as a bulwark against the perceived existential threat posed by anti-Zionism. By fully embracing its identity as a Jewish state under divine authority, Israel could theoretically fortify itself against both external opposition and internal divisions. This argument suggests that religious rule, rather than secular nationalism, might provide the legitimacy and moral foundation needed to defend the state's existence in the face of growing global criticism.

2. **Theological and Political Significance of This Argument**
   Theologically, this argument draws from traditional Jewish texts and interpretations that frame the Jewish people's connection to the land of Israel as divinely ordained. The Torah and Talmud provide a framework for Jewish governance that aligns religious law (Halakha) with the political administration of the state. In this view, a theocracy would not only fulfill religious obligations but also provide a moral justification for the state's existence that transcends secular political discourse.

Politically, the argument is significant because it challenges the current democratic structure of Israel, which seeks to balance Jewish identity with democratic principles and the rights of non-Jewish citizens. The transition to a theocratic government would represent a dramatic shift, potentially altering Israel's international relationships, especially with secular democracies, while also reshaping its internal governance structures. The implications for minority rights, legal systems, and civil liberties would be profound.

However, this proposition also raises important questions about the feasibility and desirability of such a system. Would a theocracy, grounded in religious law, be able to manage the complex realities of a modern state, especially one that exists in a highly volatile geopolitical environment? Could it effectively reconcile the diverse religious, political, and ethnic groups within Israel, including its non-Jewish populations? These questions form the basis for the broader discussion that follows in the paper, as we explore the viability and consequences of a theocratic model in light of the claim that anti-Zionism is antisemitism.

II. Historical and Religious Foundations of Zionism

A. Zionism as a Political and Religious Movement

1. **Early Zionist Thinkers and the Role of Religion in Zionism**
   Zionism emerged in the late 19th century as both a political and religious movement in response to the widespread antisemitism Jews faced in Europe. The father of modern political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, advocated for the establishment of a Jewish homeland as a practical solution to the Jewish question, which had become particularly urgent with the rise of nationalism and increasing anti-Jewish persecution in Europe. Herzl's vision, as outlined in his 1896 book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State), was largely secular and focused on the idea of Jewish self-determination in response to political exclusion and discrimination.

However, from its inception, Zionism had strong religious undertones. Many early Zionists viewed the Jewish connection to the land of Israel not just as a political matter, but as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. For religious Jews, the return to the land of Israel was tied to the concept of *Aliyah* (ascent), a spiritual return to the Promised Land, where Jews could live according to the laws and commandments set out in the Torah. As such, Zionism was both a practical response to modern geopolitical realities and a religious ideal rooted in Jewish history and eschatology.

Among the early Zionist thinkers, there were divisions regarding the role religion should play in the movement. Herzl and his secular followers saw the establishment of a Jewish state as primarily a political solution to antisemitism, while religious Zionists, like Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, believed the establishment of a Jewish state was a divinely inspired step toward the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people. This dual nature of Zionism—both as a nationalist political movement and a religious quest—set the stage for future tensions between secular and religious visions of the Jewish state.

2. **The Establishment of Israel as a Secular State with Religious Elements**
   When the State of Israel was established in 1948, it was founded as a secular democracy, with David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister and leader of the secular labor movement, playing a pivotal role in shaping the new state. Ben-Gurion and many of his contemporaries in the Zionist

leadership were secular socialists who envisioned Israel as a modern nation-state that could integrate the principles of democracy and economic development with Jewish cultural and historical identity.

However, from the beginning, the secular founders of Israel recognized the importance of religion in Israeli society, and they took steps to incorporate religious elements into the state's structure. For example, Jewish religious law (*Halakha*) governs matters of personal status, including marriage, divorce, and burial, and Orthodox Judaism holds a privileged position within the state. The Israeli government also observes Jewish holidays, and the Sabbath is officially recognized as a day of rest.

This compromise, known as the *status quo agreement*, was an effort to balance the demands of religious Zionists with the secular ideals of the state's founders. It allowed for the coexistence of secular governance with religious observance, but it also created a foundation for ongoing tensions between the secular and religious sectors of Israeli society. As Israel has developed, these tensions have become more pronounced, particularly as religious parties have gained political influence and as the state has grappled with questions of identity, governance, and the role of Jewish law in its legal system.

B. The Evolution of Zionist Thought: Secular vs. Religious Zionism

1. **Tensions Between Secular and Religious Visions of the Jewish State**
   Since its inception, Zionism has been marked by a tension between secular and religious visions of the Jewish state. Secular Zionists, such as Theodor Herzl and David Ben-Gurion, envisioned Israel as a democratic, socialist state that would serve as a refuge for Jews around the world, protecting them from persecution and offering them the opportunity to develop a new, modern Jewish identity. In this vision, the Jewish state would be rooted in Jewish history and culture but would not necessarily adhere to religious law. Instead, it would be a secular democracy with a Jewish character.

In contrast, religious Zionists saw the establishment of Israel as not only a political or cultural project but as a fulfillment of divine prophecy. For them, the creation

of a Jewish state was an essential step toward the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people and the arrival of the Messiah. This religious vision of Zionism, promoted by figures such as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, sought to infuse the state with Jewish religious principles and saw the land of Israel as a sacred space governed by *Halakha* (Jewish law). Religious Zionists believed that Israel should be not only a Jewish state but a theocratic one, governed by divine commandments and laws.

These two visions—secular and religious—have continued to shape Israeli politics and society, often leading to conflicts over the role of religion in public life, governance, and policy. Secular Israelis have often resisted efforts to impose religious law or practices on public life, while religious Zionists have sought to increase the influence of Jewish religious principles in state policy, particularly regarding issues like settlement in the occupied territories, personal status law, and education. This tension has been a defining feature of Israeli political discourse, with religious parties playing a key role in Israeli coalitions and governance.

2. **The Role of the Jewish Faith in Modern Israeli Governance**
   Despite being established as a secular democracy, Israel's governance is heavily influenced by religious considerations. Jewish religious parties, particularly those representing Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox communities, have wielded significant influence in Israeli politics, often acting as kingmakers in coalition governments. These parties have used their political power to advocate for policies that align with Jewish religious law, including maintaining the religious monopoly over issues of personal status, supporting settlement expansion in the West Bank (which they see as a religious imperative), and ensuring state funding for religious education.

At the same time, Israel's secular majority has pushed back against what they perceive as religious encroachment on public life. This is particularly evident in debates over issues such as public transportation on the Sabbath, military exemptions for ultra-Orthodox students, and the role of women in public life. Secular Israelis, particularly those in urban centers like Tel Aviv, often advocate for a more pluralistic and secular society, while religious communities seek to preserve the Jewish character of the state through adherence to religious law.

These debates reflect a broader struggle over the identity of the state of Israel: Should it be a Jewish state in the religious sense, governed by *Halakha* and embodying the messianic aspirations of religious Zionism? Or should it be a secular democracy that serves as a homeland for Jews but operates according to modern democratic principles? This question is at the heart of the tension between secular and religious Zionists and remains one of the most pressing issues in Israeli politics today.

As the state continues to evolve, the role of religion in Israeli governance will likely remain a source of debate and conflict. The tension between secularism and religious governance is emblematic of the broader challenges facing Israel as it seeks to balance its identity as both a modern democracy and a Jewish state. These challenges are especially relevant when considering arguments that propose a theocratic government as a solution to the existential threats Israel faces, particularly in the context of the argument that anti-Zionism is antisemitism.

III. The Intersection of Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

A. The Political and Ideological Roots of Anti-Zionism

1. **Anti-Zionism from Various Perspectives: Arab Nationalism, Leftist Critiques, and Jewish Opposition**
   Anti-Zionism, as a political and ideological stance, has emerged from a variety of perspectives over the past century, each with its own historical context and motivations. These perspectives are rooted in opposition to the Zionist project, which, after the establishment of Israel in 1948, became the foundation of the Israeli state. Although anti-Zionism can take on different forms, ranging from political critiques of Israeli policies to outright opposition to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, its motivations are complex and vary widely depending on the ideological background of the critics.

   - **Arab Nationalism**:
     The most prominent and sustained form of anti-Zionism has come from Arab nationalist movements. After the Balfour Declaration in

1917, which expressed British support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, Arab leaders and populations in the region increasingly viewed Zionism as a colonialist project. The creation of the State of Israel in 1948, followed by the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the Nakba (Catastrophe), intensified this view. For many Arab nationalists, opposition to Zionism became synonymous with the defense of Palestinian national rights and sovereignty. In this context, anti-Zionism was less about Jews as a people and more about the perceived illegitimacy of Israel as a state occupying Arab lands. It was rooted in a geopolitical struggle over territory, sovereignty, and national identity.

Over time, Arab nationalist regimes, particularly in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, adopted an anti-Zionist stance as a core part of their political identity, positioning themselves as defenders of the Palestinian cause. The Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973 further solidified this opposition, with Israel seen as an outpost of Western imperialism in the Middle East.

- **Leftist Critiques of Zionism**:
  Anti-Zionism also found support among various leftist and socialist movements, particularly during the Cold War era. From a Marxist perspective, Zionism was often framed as a nationalist ideology that conflicted with the internationalist goals of socialism and communism. For leftists, Zionism represented a form of bourgeois nationalism that perpetuated class divisions and distracted from the broader struggle against global capitalism. In this view, Zionism was seen as a tool of Western imperialism, particularly after Israel's alignment with the United States during the Cold War. Leftist critiques of Zionism became especially pronounced in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories following the 1967 Six-Day War was condemned as an act of colonial aggression.

Many leftist movements, particularly in Europe and the Global South, adopted a staunchly anti-Zionist position, framing Israel as an oppressor state and aligning

themselves with Palestinian liberation movements. The Soviet Union also played a significant role in promoting anti-Zionism, portraying Israel as a tool of Western imperialism and supporting Arab states and Palestinian groups in their opposition to Zionism. This leftist critique of Zionism often blurred the lines between opposition to Israeli policies and a rejection of the very idea of a Jewish state.

- **Jewish Opposition to Zionism**:
  Anti-Zionism also existed within Jewish communities, both before and after the establishment of Israel. Some Jews, particularly within ultra-Orthodox sects, opposed Zionism on religious grounds, arguing that the establishment of a Jewish state was premature and should only occur with the coming of the Messiah. Groups such as Neturei Karta continue to oppose the existence of Israel on theological grounds, viewing the modern state as a violation of Jewish law. For these groups, Zionism is seen as a secular nationalist movement that usurps the religious destiny of the Jewish people.

Additionally, in the early 20th century, some Jewish intellectuals and socialist movements opposed Zionism for ideological reasons. They believed in the possibility of full assimilation into European or American society and rejected the need for a separate Jewish state. Many Jewish Marxists, in particular, saw Zionism as a distraction from the class struggle and viewed it as a nationalist project that could not solve the problems of antisemitism or Jewish marginalization in Europe. This internal Jewish opposition to Zionism, though less prominent after the Holocaust and the creation of Israel, highlights the diverse views within the Jewish community on the issue of Zionism.

B. Antisemitism's Role in Modern Anti-Zionism

1. **How Accusations of Antisemitism Shape the Debate on Anti-Zionism**
   The claim that "anti-Zionism is antisemitism" has become a central point of contention in modern debates over Israel and its policies. Proponents of this claim argue that much of what is presented as anti-Zionism is, in fact, rooted in traditional antisemitic tropes. According to this view, opposition to the very existence of a Jewish state often goes beyond legitimate political critique and crosses into the realm of antisemitism by denying Jews

the right to self-determination. This argument has been institutionalized through frameworks such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which includes certain forms of anti-Zionist rhetoric as examples of antisemitism.

One of the central ways accusations of antisemitism shape the debate is through the argument that singling out Israel for disproportionate criticism, while ignoring or minimizing human rights abuses by other nations, reflects a double standard. Supporters of this view contend that this selective outrage is rooted in longstanding antisemitic stereotypes of Jews as uniquely malevolent or conspiratorial. They argue that denying Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state—while supporting the right of other ethnic or national groups to self-determination—is a form of antisemitic discrimination.

Critics of this conflation, however, argue that equating anti-Zionism with antisemitism stifles legitimate political discourse, particularly around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They maintain that opposition to Israel's policies, or even to the idea of a Jewish state, is a valid political position that does not necessarily stem from prejudice against Jews. For these critics, accusations of antisemitism are often used as a tool to shut down debate and delegitimize criticism of Israel's actions, particularly with regard to its occupation of Palestinian territories. This tension between accusations of antisemitism and the right to criticize Israel is a major fault line in contemporary political discourse.

2. **Exploring Instances Where Anti-Zionism is Intertwined with Antisemitic Rhetoric**
   While many forms of anti-Zionism are rooted in political or ideological opposition to the state of Israel, there are instances where anti-Zionist rhetoric is clearly intertwined with antisemitic tropes. In these cases, anti-Zionism is not just a critique of Israeli policies or nationalism, but a manifestation of deeper prejudices against Jews.

   - **Conspiracy Theories and Global Jewish Control**:
     One of the most common ways anti-Zionism intersects with antisemitism is through the propagation of conspiracy theories that accuse Jews of controlling global politics, media, and finance. These conspiracies often portray Zionism as part of a broader Jewish plot to

dominate the world, echoing themes from the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Such rhetoric appears in certain far-right, far-left, and Islamist movements, where anti-Zionism is used as a veneer for longstanding antisemitic stereotypes. Claims that Israel or "Zionists" control Western governments, particularly the United States, are examples of this form of antisemitism masquerading as political critique.

- **Demonization of Israel as Uniquely Evil**:
  Another way anti-Zionism can cross into antisemitism is through the demonization of Israel as a uniquely evil state, often described using terms like "apartheid" or "genocidal" that evoke historical atrocities. While legitimate criticism of Israel's policies is important, some critics argue that the use of such extreme rhetoric contributes to the delegitimization of the Jewish state and perpetuates antisemitic tropes. This rhetoric can paint Israel as a singularly malevolent entity, out of proportion to its actual actions, and often without similar condemnation of other countries with comparable or worse human rights records.

- **Denying Jewish Self-Determination**:
  One of the core elements of modern antisemitism in anti-Zionist rhetoric is the denial of the Jewish people's right to self-determination. Opponents of Zionism sometimes argue that Jews do not constitute a legitimate nation and thus have no right to a state of their own. This denial of national rights is often seen as antisemitic because it singles out Jews for exclusion from the global principle of self-determination, which is generally accepted for other national or ethnic groups.

IV. The Case for Theocracy in Israel

A. The Theocratic Model: A Religious State Governed by Jewish Law

1. **Exploring Jewish Theocracy: Historical Precedents and Modern Implications**
   The concept of a Jewish theocracy is rooted deeply in biblical history, where ancient Israel functioned as a theocratic society governed by religious law and divine commandments. The earliest example of Jewish theocracy can be found in the Torah, where Moses served as both a spiritual leader and a political authority, guiding the Israelites according to the laws handed down by God. The judicial, legal, and societal norms of ancient Israel were based on religious teachings, with God seen as the ultimate sovereign, and the rulers, such as judges and kings, acting as stewards of divine will.

The period of the *Shoftim* (Judges) and later the monarchy under kings like David and Solomon was, to a large degree, a form of theocracy, where the religious and political realms were deeply intertwined. The high priests held significant authority, and prophets played a crucial role in interpreting divine will and guiding the leaders of the nation. During these periods, Israel's governance was based on the Torah, and compliance with *Halakha* (Jewish law) was central to societal order.

In modern times, the establishment of a theocratic model for Israel would imply a return to this ancient form of governance, where *Halakha* would take precedence over secular law, and the state's leaders would be religious authorities, such as rabbis or high priests. While Israel today operates as a secular democracy, elements of Jewish theocracy already exist in its legal system, particularly in matters of personal status (marriage, divorce, etc.), which are governed by religious courts. However, in a full theocracy, Jewish law would govern all aspects of life, including politics, economics, and social relations.

The modern implications of a Jewish theocracy in Israel are significant. It would mean the dissolution of the current secular legal and political framework, with the authority shifting from elected officials to religious leaders who interpret and enforce *Halakha*. Such a system would likely lead to a dramatic transformation in how Israel interacts with the global community, especially with secular

democracies. It would also change the internal dynamics of Israeli society, where secular Jews, who currently form a majority, might find themselves at odds with a system that prioritizes religious laws and practices.

2. **Biblical and Talmudic Justifications for Theocratic Governance**
   The justification for a theocratic state in Israel can be found throughout Jewish religious texts. In the Torah, God explicitly commands the Israelites to follow His laws in the governance of their nation. Deuteronomy 16:18-20, for example, outlines the appointment of judges to govern the people justly, based on divine commandments. The establishment of a legal system grounded in the Torah is seen as a religious duty, ensuring that the society reflects God's will.

In the Talmud, rabbinic scholars expand on the principles of theocratic governance, discussing the importance of religious authority in leading the Jewish people. The Talmudic notion of the *Sanhedrin*, a council of rabbis who would make judicial decisions based on *Halakha*, provides a model for how a theocratic government could function in practice. The *Sanhedrin* historically acted as both a legal and religious body, overseeing matters of state and ensuring compliance with Jewish law.

Moreover, the concept of the Messiah in Jewish tradition also plays a role in the idea of theocratic governance. Many religious Zionists believe that the establishment of the State of Israel is a precursor to the Messianic era, where the Jewish people will be governed directly by divine will. A theocracy would thus be seen as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, bringing Israel closer to its ultimate redemption.

These religious justifications provide a framework for understanding the case for theocracy in Israel. They suggest that a Jewish state governed by religious law is not only historically grounded but divinely mandated, offering spiritual legitimacy to such a system.

B. Why a Theocracy Could Address the Tension Between Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

1. **The Role of Religion as a Unifying Force in the Identity of the Jewish State**
   One of the central arguments for the establishment of a theocracy in Israel is that it could serve as a unifying force, helping to resolve the existential tensions between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. As Israel continues to face opposition from various groups and states—some of whom deny its legitimacy as a Jewish state—religion offers a foundational source of identity and authority that transcends political and territorial disputes. A theocracy, by its very nature, would assert that the existence of the Jewish state is divinely mandated, making its legitimacy unquestionable from a religious standpoint.

By grounding the state's existence in religious law, a theocratic government could reinforce the idea that Israel is not just a political entity but a spiritual one. This would help to solidify its identity in a way that cannot be easily undermined by anti-Zionist critiques, which often frame Israel as an illegitimate or colonial project. In a theocracy, the right of the Jewish people to self-determination would be rooted in divine will, not just historical or political arguments. This religious foundation could serve as a counter-narrative to those who oppose the Jewish state on secular, political grounds, framing Israel's existence as part of a broader spiritual mission.

Furthermore, religion could unify disparate elements of Israeli society. Israel today is deeply divided between secular and religious Jews, as well as between Jews and non-Jews, particularly its Arab population. While a theocratic government might exacerbate certain tensions, it could also provide a common spiritual framework for governance that appeals to a wide swath of the religious Jewish population. For religious Zionists, the idea of living in a state governed by *Halakha* would resonate deeply with their vision of Israel's purpose, helping to bridge some of the divides within the Jewish community.

2. **A Theocracy as a Response to the Existential Threat Posed by Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism**
   Another argument in favor of theocratic governance is that it could provide a more robust response to the growing threat of anti-Zionism and

antisemitism. Anti-Zionist movements, particularly in the West, often critique Israel's policies and even question its legitimacy as a state. Meanwhile, antisemitism continues to be a pervasive issue, with Jewish communities around the world facing increasing hostility. A theocracy could potentially neutralize these threats by framing Israel's existence as not merely a political project but as part of a divine plan.

Theocratic governance would send a clear message to both Israel's allies and enemies: the Jewish state is not just a political entity but a religious one, whose right to exist is derived from sacred law. This could offer a stronger justification for the state's existence than secular nationalism, which can be attacked on political or ideological grounds. A theocracy could also provide a moral and religious counterbalance to the critiques of anti-Zionism, positioning Israel as a nation with a divine mandate rather than just another nation-state subject to the same critiques as any other.

Moreover, a theocratic Israel could shift the focus of the debate from nationalism and territory to religious duty and identity. By embedding itself in a religious framework, Israel could more effectively address accusations of colonialism or occupation, framing its territorial claims and governance as part of a religiously mandated mission. This would make it more difficult for anti-Zionists to argue that Israel is simply a political anomaly, as the state's existence would be seen as fulfilling a spiritual covenant.

Theologically, the establishment of a theocracy could also address the ongoing tension between Zionism and religious Jews who oppose the secular nature of the current state. Many ultra-Orthodox Jews, who see the current secular governance of Israel as problematic, could potentially find common ground in a theocratic system, which would bring the state closer to their vision of religious fulfillment.

V. Practical Considerations and Challenges of a Theocratic Israel

A. The Impact on Israeli Democracy and Secularism

1. **How a Shift Toward Theocracy Would Reshape Israeli Political Institutions**
   The establishment of a theocratic government in Israel would represent a dramatic departure from the current democratic system. Since its founding

in 1948, Israel has functioned as a secular democracy, with a parliamentary system where leaders are elected by the people, and laws are created and enforced by secular institutions. A shift toward theocracy would necessitate fundamental changes to this structure, as political authority would be transferred from elected officials to religious leaders who interpret and apply *Halakha* (Jewish law).

In a theocratic system, political institutions such as the Knesset (Israel's parliament) and the judiciary would likely be subordinated to religious authorities. For instance, rabbinical courts, which currently govern personal status issues like marriage and divorce, would assume a much broader role, presiding over all aspects of public and private life. This would diminish the role of secular courts and potentially abolish the democratic principle of checks and balances, as religious leaders would wield significant, if not absolute, authority over governance. The process of making and enforcing laws would shift from a democratic, representative model to one governed by religious interpretation, with the authority of the Torah and Talmud serving as the primary sources of legal and political legitimacy.

Furthermore, such a transformation would challenge Israel's identity as a democratic state. In a democracy, citizens—regardless of their religious affiliation—participate in the electoral process and have the right to influence the laws that govern them. In a theocratic system, however, the right to legislate would be limited to religious authorities, likely diminishing the role of non-religious citizens, minorities, and women in political life. This shift would undoubtedly provoke significant opposition from secular Israelis, who represent a sizable portion of the population and who have historically pushed for greater separation between religion and state in Israel.

2. **The Challenges of Balancing Modern Democracy with Religious Rule**
   One of the major challenges of implementing a theocratic government in Israel would be balancing the demands of modern democratic governance with the dictates of religious law. Israel, like other advanced democracies, has developed political institutions, legal norms, and a civil society based on principles of democracy, human rights, and equality before the law. These principles sometimes conflict with the tenets of *Halakha*, particularly in

areas related to gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and the treatment of non-Jewish minorities.

For example, *Halakha* traditionally prescribes different roles and responsibilities for men and women, which may conflict with Israel's current laws on gender equality. In a theocratic system, religious laws that restrict women's participation in public life or limit their rights in matters such as divorce could be enforced, potentially rolling back decades of progress in women's rights in Israel. Similarly, LGBTQ+ rights would likely be curtailed in a theocracy, as Orthodox interpretations of *Halakha* generally prohibit same-sex relationships.

Another key challenge would be maintaining the rights of Israel's non-Jewish citizens, particularly its Arab minority, which makes up around 20% of the population. While Israel's current legal framework guarantees equal rights to all citizens regardless of their religion, a theocracy governed by Jewish law might impose restrictions on non-Jews, particularly in areas related to religious observance, marriage, and land ownership. This could deepen existing divisions between Jewish and Arab citizens and lead to heightened tensions or even civil unrest.

Theocratic governance would also face challenges in managing a society as diverse as Israel's. Israel is home to a wide range of religious communities, including secular Jews, Orthodox Jews, ultra-Orthodox Jews, and non-Jewish groups such as Christians, Muslims, and Druze. Imposing a singular religious authority in such a pluralistic society would likely be a source of conflict, as different groups might resist efforts to standardize religious practices or laws. Secular Israelis, in particular, would likely object to the imposition of religious law in areas like public transportation, entertainment, and education, which have historically been battlegrounds between religious and secular communities.

B. Potential International and Diplomatic Implications

1. **How Theocratic Governance Would Affect Israel's Global Relationships, Particularly with Secular Democracies**
   Israel's current status as a democratic state is one of the pillars of its international relationships, particularly with Western democracies such as

the United States and European Union members. These relationships are based, in part, on shared values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. If Israel were to transition to a theocratic form of government, these relationships would likely face significant challenges, as many of Israel's closest allies could find it difficult to reconcile their support for the Jewish state with their commitment to democratic principles.

For the United States, Israel's most important ally, a move toward theocracy could complicate the deep political and military ties that have been cultivated over decades. U.S. foreign policy has long emphasized support for democratic governance and human rights, and a theocratic Israel might be seen as diverging from these principles. This could lead to increased criticism from American lawmakers, particularly those who prioritize human rights and democratic governance in U.S. foreign policy. It could also weaken bipartisan support for Israel in the U.S. Congress, where Israel has traditionally been a unifying issue.

In Europe, where secularism is a deeply ingrained political value, Israel's shift toward theocracy could lead to increased tensions with European Union institutions and member states. European governments, which are already critical of some of Israel's policies, particularly with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, might view the establishment of a theocratic government as a step backward for human rights and democratic norms. This could result in a deterioration of diplomatic relations, decreased economic cooperation, and potentially more vocal support for the Palestinian cause in international forums.

On a broader scale, Israel's standing in international organizations like the United Nations might also be affected. A theocratic Israel could face greater scrutiny and criticism from the international community, particularly on issues related to human rights, religious freedom, and minority rights. Such a shift might also alienate Israel from global alliances that prioritize democratic governance, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue.

2. **The Impact on Israeli-Palestinian Relations and Peace Prospects**
   The transition to a theocratic government in Israel would also have significant implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader peace process. Currently, peace negotiations between Israel and the

> Palestinian Authority are based on the idea of a two-state solution, which envisions a democratic Israel living alongside a future Palestinian state. A shift toward theocracy would complicate this framework, as religious Zionists often reject the notion of a two-state solution, instead seeing the entire land of Israel—including the West Bank and Gaza—as part of the biblical Promised Land that belongs exclusively to the Jewish people.

In a theocratic system, territorial concessions to the Palestinians would be viewed not as political compromises, but as violations of divine law. This could further embolden right-wing religious settlers in the West Bank, who already resist the idea of giving up land for peace. A theocratic government would likely prioritize the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, which would lead to increased tensions with the Palestinian population and potentially spark further violence.

For the Palestinians, a theocratic Israel would be seen as a rejection of their national aspirations and a direct threat to their claims to the land. The prospects for meaningful negotiations would diminish, as theocratic governance would make it difficult for Israel to engage in territorial compromises or recognize Palestinian sovereignty. This could lead to the complete breakdown of the peace process, further isolating Israel internationally and potentially leading to greater conflict with its Arab neighbors.

Additionally, a theocratic Israel might increase religious tensions in Jerusalem, particularly over the status of the Temple Mount, which is a sacred site for both Jews and Muslims. Religious Zionists often advocate for increased Jewish access to and control over the Temple Mount, which could provoke violent reactions from the Palestinian population and the broader Muslim world. A theocratic government would likely pursue policies that prioritize Jewish religious claims to the site, further inflaming tensions in an already volatile region.

VI. Criticisms of a Theocratic Government

A. Internal Resistance: Secular and Liberal Israeli Perspectives

1. **The Opposition Within Israel to Religious Rule**
   The establishment of a theocratic government in Israel would likely encounter strong opposition from within the country, particularly from secular and liberal segments of the population. Since its founding, Israel has been a deeply pluralistic society, comprising a wide range of religious beliefs and levels of observance, with secular Jews forming a significant portion of the population. Secular Jews, particularly those in urban areas such as Tel Aviv, often hold progressive values, advocate for the separation of religion and state, and are strongly committed to Israel's democratic principles. For these citizens, the prospect of a theocratic regime governed by religious law would be deeply unsettling, as it would represent a fundamental shift in the nature of the state, infringing on personal freedoms and limiting secular lifestyles.

Many secular Israelis view the current balance between religion and state as already tilted too far in favor of religious authority. The *status quo* agreement, established at the founding of Israel, allows religious institutions to govern matters of personal status, such as marriage, divorce, and conversion, which already causes tensions. For example, secular Israelis who wish to marry outside of the Orthodox framework must often travel abroad to obtain civil marriages, as these are not legally recognized in Israel. The idea of expanding religious rule to encompass broader aspects of governance, including economic, social, and political policies, would likely intensify this opposition and provoke widespread protests.

Additionally, many secular Israelis are deeply committed to preserving Israel as a liberal democracy, with equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation or level of observance. A theocracy would challenge this vision, potentially creating a tiered society in which religious Jews hold privileged status, while secular Jews and non-Jews are marginalized. This would go against the foundational values of the modern Israeli state, leading to a fierce backlash from those who believe in the importance of democracy, personal liberty, and pluralism. Secular political parties, such as Yesh Atid and Meretz, would almost

certainly rally their supporters against any efforts to move toward theocratic rule, viewing it as an existential threat to Israel's democratic character.

2. **How Secular Jewish Communities Might React to Theocratic Governance**
   Secular Jewish communities in Israel would likely resist the imposition of theocratic governance through various forms of political activism, legal challenges, and public protest. Many secular Israelis would see the shift toward a theocratic state as an infringement on their civil liberties, particularly their right to live according to their own values and beliefs, free from the dictates of religious authorities. In such a scenario, mass demonstrations could become a frequent occurrence, as secular Jews attempt to prevent religious leaders from imposing restrictions on aspects of daily life, such as public transportation on the Sabbath, the sale of non-kosher food, or secular education.

The imposition of religious law in public life would be particularly controversial in areas such as gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and the role of religion in education. Secular Jews, especially younger generations, are likely to object to religious laws that enforce gender segregation, restrict women's rights in family law or public spaces, or prohibit same-sex relationships, which are currently recognized by Israel's secular legal system. These tensions could lead to significant societal divisions, with secular Israelis pushing back against what they would perceive as a form of religious authoritarianism.

Furthermore, secular communities could turn to Israel's legal system and international organizations to challenge theocratic policies, invoking human rights principles and democratic ideals in their defense. Secular and liberal activists may also seek support from global Jewish communities, particularly in the United States and Europe, where secular Judaism and progressive values are more dominant. Diaspora Jews who are committed to Israel's democratic character would likely express solidarity with Israeli secularists, further complicating Israel's internal politics and its relationship with Jewish communities abroad.

B. External Critiques: International Perspectives

1. **How Global Powers and International Organizations Might Respond to a Theocratic Israel**
   The shift toward theocratic governance in Israel would not only provoke internal opposition but also draw significant external criticism from global powers and international organizations. Israel has long been viewed as a liberal democracy in the Middle East, and its democratic character has been a cornerstone of its relationships with Western democracies, especially the United States and Europe. A move toward theocracy would be seen by many of these nations as a departure from the democratic values that have underpinned their support for Israel over the decades.

Western governments, particularly in Europe and North America, are likely to view a theocratic Israel as a problematic development. While many of these countries support Israel as a Jewish state, they also emphasize the importance of democratic governance, human rights, and pluralism. A shift toward religious rule, particularly if it results in the marginalization of secular citizens, non-Jews, or women, would raise concerns about Israel's commitment to these values. For example, the United States, which has traditionally been Israel's strongest ally, could face pressure from lawmakers and advocacy groups to reevaluate its support if Israel is seen as moving away from democratic norms.

European nations, which already have complex relationships with Israel due to disagreements over Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza, would likely respond with heightened criticism. The European Union has been vocal about its concerns regarding human rights in Israel and the occupied territories, and a theocratic government might further strain relations. The EU and individual member states could increase their scrutiny of Israel's human rights record, potentially resulting in diplomatic tensions or economic consequences, such as restrictions on trade or participation in international agreements.

International organizations, including the United Nations, would also weigh in on the issue. The UN has frequently debated Israel's policies, particularly in relation to the Palestinian conflict, and a move toward theocracy could intensify global criticism. A theocratic government, especially one that enforces religious laws that discriminate against minorities or infringe on basic human rights, could lead

to renewed efforts within the UN to condemn Israeli policies. This could result in additional resolutions or sanctions, further isolating Israel on the world stage.

2. **Potential Criticisms from Human Rights Organizations and Foreign Governments**
   Human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, would likely be at the forefront of the international criticism directed at a theocratic Israel. These groups already monitor Israel closely for human rights abuses, particularly in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a shift toward theocratic governance would likely prompt renewed scrutiny of Israel's treatment of its citizens. Human rights organizations could raise concerns about religious laws that infringe on the rights of women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and religious or ethnic minorities, arguing that a theocracy would undermine Israel's commitments to international human rights norms.

For instance, human rights groups could focus on issues such as gender segregation in public spaces, restrictions on women's autonomy in family law, or the exclusion of non-Jewish citizens from key aspects of public life. Additionally, the imposition of religious law on Israel's large Arab population, which includes Muslims, Christians, and Druze, could lead to accusations of discrimination and unequal treatment. These concerns would be amplified by the fact that Israel's Declaration of Independence guarantees equality for all citizens, regardless of religion, race, or gender—a commitment that might be compromised in a theocratic system.

Foreign governments, particularly in democratic nations, would likely echo these concerns. Governments in North America and Europe, which are already sensitive to human rights issues, would be under pressure to speak out against policies that they perceive as discriminatory or undemocratic. This could lead to a cooling of diplomatic relations, particularly if Israel's theocratic government enacts policies that are seen as violating international human rights standards. Western countries might also reassess their economic and military aid to Israel, particularly if public opinion in those countries shifts in response to perceived violations of democratic principles or human rights.

The broader international response to a theocratic Israel would likely hinge on how far religious rule encroaches on the rights of its citizens and minorities. If a theocratic government enforces policies that violate widely accepted human rights norms, Israel could face increasing isolation in international forums. This could undermine Israel's global standing, complicating its ability to secure diplomatic and economic partnerships and further intensifying the challenges it faces on the world stage.

VII. Conclusion

A. Reflection on the Implications of the Argument

The argument that "anti-Zionism is antisemitism" has become a significant and widely debated claim in contemporary discourse. If we accept this premise, the implications are far-reaching, particularly for how Israel is understood and governed. The conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism suggests that opposition to the Jewish state is not merely a political or ideological critique but a form of hostility toward Jewish identity and existence. In this light, the very legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state comes under existential threat from both domestic and international forces.

The proposal that a theocratic model could resolve these underlying tensions arises from the idea that a secular or democratic system may not fully protect Israel from such opposition. In a secular democracy, Israel must constantly justify its existence in political terms, facing external critiques of its policies and internal divisions between religious and secular communities. A theocracy, however, could provide a more robust and unified response by grounding Israel's legitimacy in religious law and divine authority. By framing its right to exist not as a political construct but as a religious mandate, a theocratic government could potentially shield Israel from the attacks of anti-Zionism by shifting the debate from political legitimacy to spiritual destiny.

In this model, Israel would no longer need to engage in secular debates over national self-determination, human rights, or territorial disputes. Instead, its governance would be framed as a continuation of Jewish religious tradition, fulfilling the divine promise to the Jewish people. This could, in theory, resolve the

tension between Israel's identity as a modern state and its role as a spiritual homeland, while addressing the threat posed by anti-Zionist movements.

However, while this argument presents a bold solution, it also raises profound questions about the future of Israel's democratic character, the rights of its citizens, and its relationships with the global community. The notion of a theocratic Israel is not only about securing religious legitimacy but also about reconciling religious governance with the complexities of a pluralistic, modern society. These implications must be carefully considered before advocating such a dramatic shift in Israel's governance.

B. A Call for Further Debate

The idea of a theocratic Israel as a response to anti-Zionism and antisemitism demands a deeper exploration of the relationship between religion, statehood, and identity in the future of Israel. The interplay between these forces has long been a defining feature of Israeli society, and the question of whether Israel should remain a secular democracy or move toward a more theocratic form of government is central to its ongoing national debate. This paper suggests that the tensions between anti-Zionism, antisemitism, and secular governance warrant further examination, especially in light of Israel's unique role as both a modern nation-state and a spiritual homeland for Jews worldwide.

Future discussions on this topic should take into account the broader ethical, political, and social ramifications of a theocratic state. One critical aspect to consider is the impact of such a shift on the rights of non-religious and non-Jewish citizens in Israel. Would a theocratic government be able to uphold principles of equality and justice for all citizens, or would it create a system of governance that privileges one religious group over others? This question is particularly relevant in a society as diverse as Israel's, where secular Jews, Arabs, Christians, and other minorities all play important roles in the nation's fabric.

Furthermore, the political ramifications of such a shift cannot be overlooked. Israel's international standing is built on its identity as a democratic state, and any move toward theocracy could jeopardize its relationships with key allies, particularly Western democracies. How would a theocratic Israel navigate its

geopolitical alliances, particularly in an increasingly interconnected world that values democratic governance and human rights? This is a crucial area for further debate and consideration.

Finally, the social implications of a theocratic state must also be carefully analyzed. A theocratic Israel would likely deepen existing divisions within Israeli society, particularly between secular and religious communities. How could a theocratic system reconcile these differences and foster a sense of unity, rather than exacerbating social fragmentation? This is another vital area for discussion, as Israel grapples with its identity as both a Jewish state and a diverse, pluralistic society.

In conclusion, while the argument that a theocratic model could address the challenges posed by anti-Zionism and antisemitism is intriguing, it also opens the door to a host of ethical and practical dilemmas that must be thoroughly explored. As Israel continues to navigate its complex identity as a nation, it is essential to engage in open, thoughtful debates about the role of religion in governance and the future of the Jewish state. These discussions should not only consider the immediate political benefits of a theocracy but also the long-term impact on Israel's democratic values, its social cohesion, and its place in the global community.

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